

CHRISTIANITY and *CRISIS*

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Christ and Our Political Decisions

A CORRESPONDENT writes us privately: "Most of us would give our right arm to find some sanction for a position in the matter of war which would let us go along with the Government unhaunted by the feeling that Christ has anything to say about our decisions." We quote this interesting confession because it is so typical of the convictions of American Christians who regard with abhorrence the position of this journal on the question of war.

It will be noted that we are accused first of trying to find a position which will let us "go along with the Government." This is, of course, a complete misunderstanding of the motives which actuate that part of the Christian fellowship for which we presume to be a voice. We are not primarily interested in "going along with the Government." We have as frequently criticized our Government as have the isolationists. Whatever may be said of the position of church leaders who have urged a more responsible attitude on the part of our nation toward the world catastrophe, the idea that we are looking for a way of making political conformity morally tolerable is a complete irrelevance. The idea probably arises in the minds of Christian isolationists because they have asserted so long that "this is the President's war" that they have come to believe it themselves. We do not believe that this is the President's war. We believe that he has fashioned a policy which expresses with remarkable shrewdness two partially contradictory impulses in American public life: the desire to help the democracies defeat Nazism, and also the desire to stay out of war. We have criticized the President because at times he has made the two impulses seem more compatible than they really are. But we believe it to be foolish to regard the peril in which we stand as of the President's contriving.

The idea that Christians who are willing to face the duty of defeating tyranny (even if, in the pursuance of that duty, they should become involved in the horrors of war) have discovered a way of ridding their consciences of the uneasy feeling that "Christ has anything to say about our decisions" is another of those self-righteous judgments which isolationist-

pacifist Christians constantly make about our position. Let them consider how much of "a strain on the tie that binds" these judgments are. Of course they do not mean to be self-righteous; that is why they refute the charge with such an air of injured innocence. They merely have a creed which makes this kind of self-righteousness inevitable. They have no conception of the ambiguity of all historical decisions. They are so convinced that Christ demands non-participation in war that they are unable to see how any one could become involved in war without completely eliminating Christ from his decisions.

We happen to believe that the final good for which Christ stands is not so simple an alternative to the evils of human history as our isolationist-pacifists imagine. We know that the best systems of justice which the world has ever known have been filled with positive evil as well as incomplete good. But we also know that in a sinful world systems of justice and civilization are both more precious and more precarious than those imagine who think it easy to substitute some perfect scheme of brotherhood for them.

When we ridicule ideas of a negotiated peace at a time when the military situation favors the dictatorships, we do so because we know that it is not possible in human history to achieve the kind of international brotherhood, such as our pacifist-isolationist brethren hope for through a negotiated peace, without regard to military and political exigencies. They believe that a just peace offer would either beguile the tyrant from his ambitions of world dominion, or would persuade his unhappy subjects to revolt. If we believe that a tyrant's heart is not softened without defeat, and that his subjects can neither conceive the will nor generate the power to revolt so long as the prestige of triumph gives tyranny a political aura which hides its moral bankruptcy; if we have such convictions in contrast to simple hopes for a just peace by negotiation in the present situation, it is not because we have eliminated Christ from our convictions or decisions. It is because we interpret life, man, history, and even God and Christ in different terms than some of our brethren. We believe that

the evil in man is more stubborn, that life and history are more tragic, and that the God who is revealed in Christ is more terrible in His judgments than is envisaged in sentimentalized versions of the Christian faith.

We would be truly unchristian if we held to these convictions and made the decisions which we have made without an uneasy conscience about the evils in our own lives which have forced the tragic alternatives of this hour upon us. But we realize, as our pacifist-isolationist Christians do not always seem to realize that alternative decisions would leave us with an equally uneasy conscience. Might we not counter the assertion of our correspondent with a parallel assertion running something like this: "Most of us would give our right arm to be able to go along with William Randolph Hearst, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Hoover in a policy which avoids American participation in war, unhaunted by the feeling that Christ has anything to do with our decisions." We might give the figure of the accusing Christ a greater relevance if we translated the final part of the phrase to read: "unhaunted by the sense that millions of Jews, Czechs, Poles, Danes, Norwegians, Serbs, Greeks, and French, living in the misery of slavery, are accusing us of consigning them to living death by our irresponsibility." The only difficulty with this parallel is that it commits us to one glaring insincerity. We would *not* "give our right arm" to be able to take such a decision. We find it morally too intolerable to entertain.

We know very well that our pacifist-isolationist brethren are outraged by the charge that their policy has similarities, not to say identities, with that of "America First." Suppose, however, that there had been no conscious collaboration of any kind, suppose the religious group had not called upon its followers to attend the America First mass meetings, suppose the journal of Christian isolationism which feels itself outraged by the charge of collaboration had not declared specific political proposals, which appear morally dubious to many of us, to be "integral to the Christian gospel not only for our time but for all time." Suppose all these things were not true. Ought there not still be an uneasy conscience if policies meant to prove the Christian's loyalty to Christ run in the same general direction as those which are dictated by national pride, or the sense of continental self-sufficiency, or by mere callous indifference toward the rights and liberties of enslaved peoples?

We do not claim that our Christian brethren are actuated by these motives. We will give them what they deny us: the confidence that they are trying sincerely to make their decisions in loyalty to Christ. We merely believe that they are not as conscious as

they ought to be of the ambiguity of all human decisions and actions, including those which seek to separate the Christian from the horrors of war.

If this obvious character of all human actions were better understood in American Christianity, we would have less pacifist-isolationism and more pure religious pacifism. Outside the Quaker community, the latter hardly exists in our nation. In place of such a pacifism rooted in a broken spirit and a contrite heart, we have a blithe religious perfectionism which is blissfully ignorant of the Janus-faced character of all human decisions. So it busies itself with projects to "keep America out of war," to establish a "peace through mediation," with political propaganda designed to prove that "this is the President's war" and with political analyses meant to convince us that we are not in peril of invasion or that South America would not fall under Axis domination in the event of a German victory.

We have been criticized for defining this isolationist-pacifism as "perfectionism." In one sense that criticism is justified. Quite obviously political policies which betray embarrassing affinities with the policies of the Hearst press are not perfectionist, however pure the motive which prompts them. But in that case the perfectionist claim ought to be disavowed. The explicit and implicit claim that Christ has prompted the one, and not the alternative political decision, ought to cease.

Current Theological Literature

SINCE this column is not written by the Editor, it is possible to tell the exact truth and to say that the most important book in the field of theology in this country in recent years is Reinhold Niebuhr's first volume of Gifford Lectures, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. This is an extraordinarily acute and profound examination of the common conceptions of human nature both in theology and in secular philosophy and it shows to a greater degree than any of its author's writings the systematic and essentially balanced character of his thought. On the surface it may appear that Doctor Niebuhr has lived too much with Augustine and Luther but actually it is his plan to work out a synthesis of the insights of both the Reformation and the Renaissance as representative of two contrasting strains in the history of thought. This volume and hints that have been given in articles and lectures in regard to the second volume point to the conviction that the two volumes will be one of the great syntheses in the history of modern theology.

Readers of this journal would do well to read the pamphlet by Professor G. H. C. MacGregor of Glasgow University on *The Relevance of an Impossible*

Ethical Ideal. This is a frontal attack upon Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of Christian pacifism and a statement of the Christian pacifism that deserves careful consideration. It is one of the fairest criticisms of Niebuhr that have appeared in connection with the pacifist controversy. It is interesting to note that the major theological part of the pamphlet is devoted to a defence of the idea that Christianity does represent faith in the possibilities of redeeming human life in this world (an answer to Niebuhr's attacks on the general trend he calls "perfectionism") but that the real defence of pacifism as a policy today is based largely upon the judgment that modern war is the greatest evil in all circumstances, the one evil on which as a matter of strategy the contemporary Christian should concentrate. This is a relative judgment based upon recent history and one which does not necessarily follow from the theology that precedes it.

Three books of distinction have been written this year concerning the problem of religious knowledge. Douglas Clyde Macintosh's *Problem of Religious Knowledge* is a very learned survey of all the modern literature in the field and an able statement of the author's constructive position. Edwin Lewis' *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation* is a thorough and scholarly presentation of a neo-orthodox conception of revelation in rather conventional terms. H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Meaning of Revelation* is the most original of these books. It is controlled by a clear recognition of the limitations of reason in dealing with the choice between fundamentally opposed presuppositions together with the conviction that the insights of faith can be made intelligible to reason. The reader may feel that the author walks a tight-rope between what might easily become obscurantism on the one hand and scepticism on the other. He calls his theology "a confessional theology" and he renounces all attempts to defend it on the basis of general human experience but one wonders if there is not a structure of reality which can be discerned in a variety of ways even apart from faith and that sooner or later "a confessional theology" must be judged by its adequacy in dealing with that structure.

Two books by professional philosophers are of special interest. Charles Hartshorne in his *The Vision of God* laboriously, with more of an apparatus of logic than is often used on the subject, shows that there is a conception of God that is more adequate religiously and more defensible philosophically than the classical conception of a God whose perfection is absolute and changeless. Professor Hartshorne means that we may in a significant sense regard God as perfect without denying the possibility that His experience can be enriched by what happens in the word of time and change. He realizes that he is in an exhaustive fashion regularizing a type of thought

which has been common in modern philosophy and modern theology. Classical theology by means of the doctrine of the Trinity has made possible the preservation of many of the values for which Professor Hartshorne is arguing but it must be admitted that the metaphysical conception of God that was the background for that doctrine was less suitable than one for which Hartshorne pleads. Professor James Bissett Pratt in his *Can We Keep the Faith?* offers an attractive statement of liberalism in theology and at the same time a defence of essential Christian positions which is all the more effective because the author maintains a degree of detachment from institutional Christianity and because he writes as an expert in both the history of religions and in the psychology of religion.

Doctor John Mackay in his *A Preface to Christian Theology* has done a fine job of mediating to America the insights of what in a general way would be regarded as neo-orthodoxy. He writes as a man who feels the needs of humanity in their specifically modern forms and who is able to present classical Protestantism in a fresh way to meet those needs. This book together with Professor Pratt's book would be of great help to laymen who desire to find good statements of both liberal and neo-orthodox Christianity.

Two books that deal more directly with the problems of society are F. Ernest Johnson's *The Social Gospel Re-examined* and Justin Wroe Nixon's *Protestantism's Hour of Decision*. Both have chapters on the subject of war and pacifism which can be recommended. The former deals ably with the theological issues which underlie the social interpretation of Christianity and should be a helpful factor in the reconstruction of theology in America; the latter is of special value because of the author's statesmanlike grasp of many practical issues confronting the Church and should be of help to laymen. Doctor Nixon's treatment of pacifism seems unfair at one point where he makes a sharp contrast between the pacifist and the patriot. Many pacifists sincerely believe that their course is in the true interests of their country.

J. C. B.

Publishers and prices of the books mentioned: Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Scribners, \$2.75; MacGregor, *The Relevance of an Impossible Ethical Ideal*, Fellowship of Reconciliation, .20; Macintosh, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge*, Harpers, \$3.50; Lewis, *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, Harpers, \$3.00; Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, Macmillan, \$2.00; Hartshorne, *The Vision of God*, Willett and Clark, \$3.00; Pratt, *Can We Keep the Faith?*, Yale University Press, \$2.75; Mackay, *A Preface to Christian Theology*, Macmillan, \$2.00; Johnson, *The Social Gospel Re-examined*, Harpers, \$2.00; Nixon, *Protestantism's Hour of Decision*, Judson Press, \$1.39.

An Epistle to American Christians

CLARIS EDWIN SILCOX

AS I write these words in Toronto, several thousand American legionnaires, veterans of the last World War, are gathered in this city to offer us Canadians a further evidence of the solidarity of our two nations. Such a demonstration serves to corroborate our faith that the heart of America is sound—a faith already attested by the cordiality shown to British evacuee children in the United States, by the many gifts made to the British war effort by Americans, and above all, by the practical help furnished by the American government, especially in the lease-lend bill. All this will never be forgotten.

Never were our two peoples closer together. We have forgotten the old resentment over the question as to who won the last war. We may even admit now that perhaps neither Great Britain nor the United States won that war but Germany, although that was neither your feeling nor ours on the day of the Armistice in 1918. We are even inclined to forget who helped to lose the peace, abandoning the baby League of Nations and leaving it on our doorstep, thus making more possible the present conflagration. For now we know, that with your help, we may look forward to the dawn of victory after what may prove to be a long succession of Black and Bad Fridays. The active and practical sympathy of the American nation helps mightily to maintain our morale.

But there is one thing that causes great anxiety to those of us who are the children of the Church and jealous for the future of Christianity if not for the Lord of Hosts as well. We have been visited by many American journalists, columnists, playwrights, motion-picture actors and actresses, businessmen and political leaders who have encouraged us in our desperate war effort, assured us that the battle in which we are engaged is also their battle, and shown a gratifying appreciation of some of the moral and spiritual values which are at stake. Many American religious leaders too have made clear to us their own devotion to our cause. For all this we are profoundly grateful. But the published utterances of too many American religious leaders and the official side-stepping declarations of some of the Church courts have been, to put it mildly, sentimental, unrealistic, and quite unworthy of the great moral traditions of the mighty republic. Thus at the very moment when the American and Canadian peoples are drawing so closely together, when the hope of ecumenicity has taken hold of the church folk on the North American continent, there is a real danger that the religious leadership of the two countries may draw apart with devastating consequences.

Pacifism and Church Leadership

That in itself would be tragic enough, but there is an even greater danger. The wave of pacifism, isolationism and non-interventionism which seems to have undermined the logic and realism of some American churchmen may ultimately wrest the spiritual leadership of America from the Church for years to come. Certainly, if Germany wins the war in Europe, it will turn its attention to the new world and to the humiliation of the "upstart republic" of the West. Latin America, despite the protestations of the United States, will fall into the lap of the Nazis like a ripe plum as those of us who know South America intimately realize. Eventually it will be the turn of the United States either to fight or to do the appeasing, and those who would have fought gladly at your side may not be there to bring you any help. If you *win* that fight, you alone, like Atlas, will have to bear a world on your shoulders, but it will be a bleeding and shattered world. Or you may *lose*, being destroyed from within even as Hitler has already destroyed so many other nations, and if this is so, then a nation of slaves will remember with bitterness the spiritual leaders who, unmindful of their great legacy of freedom, sold it down the river for a whim of "conscience."

On the other hand, if Britain wins the conflict, why should pacifists, isolationists and non-interventionists who have made its victory only more difficult, harbor the illusion that anybody will pay attention to their blueprints for a better world, or that their Church will have any influence in determining the terms of a just and durable peace? No one who has kept "above the battle" has any right to make the peace. The integrity of the world of tomorrow will then be placed in the hands of those who have accepted their full responsibility for the collective defense of the rights of men.

Pacifism in Canada

We recognize the deep sincerity of most of the pacifists whom we know and we value their witness, even when we question their wisdom. Here in Canada we have had some experience in dealing with them, and on the whole, we are rather proud of our record. After the War of Independence, certain Quakers and Mennonites in the United States were subjected to a good deal of derision for their non-participation in the fighting. They felt that they would be less embarrassed under the British flag and they applied for admission to Canada. On August 20, 1792, John

Graves Simcoe, first governor of Upper Canada (now Ontario) wrote to the secretary of the colonies, Lord Dundas, informing him that he had given such Quakers the assurance of exemption from military service which the British Government always gave to members of that sect. Under such assurances, a fair number of these two religious groups came to Ontario and some of the families longest-settled in this province are sprung from these conscientious objectors.

In 1873 an effort was made by Czar Alexander II of Russia to compel the Mennonites of Southern Russia to give indirect military service. They sought and obtained admission to Canada, again under the express promise contained in a special order-in-council, to the effect that "an entire exemption from military service is by law and order-in-council granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites. Still again, in 1898, the Doukhobours were given a haven in Canada under a similar agreement.

After the last World War, a certain amount of pacifism was evident in Canada, due in part to the horror created by the war and the extreme difficulty experienced by devout men in squaring their conduct in war with what seemed to be the mandates of the gospel. It was less conspicuous, however, because the Canadian churches and the Canadian people put their faith in the League of Nations. As the depression encompassed the country, some social radicals added pacifism to their socialist beliefs, and attempted to interpret all wars in terms of economic imperialism. Some of these pacifists eventually found their way into the League of Nations Society, eager enough to promote peace but always ready to sabotage any move to support the application of military sanctions. One important church in the Dominion began to issue indiscreet and ill-considered resolutions at the meetings of its General Council, not only proclaiming that war was out of harmony with the mind of Christ but also that the Church as Church should keep itself pure and undefiled from all such bellicose matters and not even permit its ministers to serve as chaplains unless they went in civilian dress!

It was not surprising therefore, that soon after the present war broke out, a group of seventy-five ministers belonging to this Church (out of a total of about three thousand), issued a manifesto in which they notified all that "we find ourselves, not without pain and regret, unable to approve this war." Note, they did not say "any war," but "this war." They went on to add that they took their stand upon the declaration of the highest court of the Church which had stated that since "war is contrary to the mind of Christ . . . we positively reject war, because war rejects love, defies the will of Christ, and denies the worth of man." They also referred with approval to certain portions of the findings of the Oxford

Conference in 1937. "Since," they claimed, "the Churches lost heavily in spiritual authority because of the general surrender to the war-spirit in 1914-1918, we think it ought to be placed on record now, in view of the further loss of spiritual authority probable if the Church sanctions the present war, that at least some representatives of the Christian churches disapproved and uttered their protest."

The United Church was placed in a difficult position by the manifesto and even more by its own premature declarations, since the Defense of Canada Regulations, already issued by the Government, made any step tending to interfere with recruiting a penal offense, and this manifesto was a concerted and mass-expression of opposition to the war. Through its sub-executive it issued a mild rebuke to those who had sought to embarrass the Government, while it affirmed its intention of protecting conscientious objectors. It also assured His Majesty of the loyalty of the Church in the crisis. It then went ahead with the organization of the war effort of its people and with the selection of those who could most suitably serve as chaplains.

Many morals might well be drawn from the publication of the manifesto of the seventy-five and its aftermath, but the less said the better. They loved peace not wisely but too well. Some personal tragedies ensued and most assuredly the whole Dominion knew that certain ministers had not "approved this war." Perhaps, it did some good. It remains to be seen whether their action will enhance the spiritual authority of the Church after the war is over, or diminish it.

In the other churches, the pacifist movement hardly excited a ripple. One sect, Jehovah's Witnesses, has been placed in the category of illegal organizations. It may now be said quite categorically that the Canadian churches are whole-heartedly supporting the war. Nobody in Canada is "blessing" this war; we all damn it right heartily, while we accept it as one of the frightful and tragic jobs that has to be carried through, no matter what the cost, if the freedom of mankind is to be relatively preserved. It must be said that the ministers in Canadian churches have tried to keep out of their pulpits any unseemly hatred and have refused to convert the sanctuary into a recruiting-stand. The churches also acted successfully to secure for German-speaking churches the formal recognition, on the part of the Government, of their right to continue to use the German language in their services of worship and in many other ways have guarded as best they could the essential decencies still possible in an indecent world.

Meanwhile the pacifist issue in Canada is "a wave of the past." It has ceased to be vital. Conscientious objectors are being offered the possibility of alternative service and special victory bonds are available

for such purchasers as do not wish their money to be used in buying Spitfires but in ameliorating the evils undoubtedly caused by war.

Some of those who thought they were pacifists were not really pacifists at all. They were just isolationists or social radicals or sentimentalists. Others, however, were and probably still are genuine in their disapproval of any war on religious grounds. The United Church appointed some of these among its delegates to the North American Ecumenical Conference. But the issue itself is dead.

Canadian Isolationism

We in Canada have had our isolationists too, but Canadian isolationism is somewhat *sui generis* and is rapidly disappearing as well as pacifism. Unlike American isolationism, it was based not on any Canadian analogue of the American dream or of manifest destiny, nor on the principle implicit in the Book of Mormon that God expected the New Zion to arise in the Western Hemisphere. Of course, in one sense, we Canadians are Americans as much as any one, but we have not been addicted to such isolationist dreams since Canada is the only large American country which, ever since its settlement, has preserved a political nexus with Europe. Canadian isolationism is due rather to the insistence of the French-Canadians who form about 30 per cent of the population on being first, themselves; secondly, Canadians; thirdly and only then, citizens of the greater Britain. Until this war, they have always been averse to fighting outside of Canada but they have loudly announced that they will fight to the last man for Canada on Canadian soil. Their pet phrase is: "The last shot to be fired for Canadian defense will be fired by a French-Canadian." (Some cynic recently asked if they would not, for a change, be willing to fire the first shot!)

When conscription was introduced during the last war it all but broke the Dominion asunder and nearly led to civil war between the French-speaking and the English-speaking in Canada.¹ That makes Canada today so wary in applying any policy of conscription. Those of us who admire the many qualities of the French-Canadians fully appreciate their state of mind, however much we may regret it; and that knowledge, coupled with an understandable desire for national unity, may have inclined some of us who had no French background to sympathize with a modified form of isolationism.

Some of our isolationists might be more vocal today if they really believed isolationism to be at all practicable in the modern world and not a menace to the continuance of our own freedom and to the freedom of the world. For we have little enthusiasm about

¹See "The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918," by Elizabeth H. Armstrong (Columbia University Press).

sending our beloved sons hither and yon around the world to take a hand in putting down every little local war that may break out between refractory peoples, or periodically leaving, out of our relatively small population, some 65,000 dead on the fields of Flanders as we did in the last war. (It should be remembered that, when our respective populations are considered, 65,000 Canadian dead is equivalent to over 650,000 American dead!) Canadians know bitterly what the last war cost them in human life, resources and blasted hopes. Despite all that, however, Canada would have been prepared to do its part in a program of collective security. Even as late as 1935, many of our outstanding authorities on international affairs showed a greater readiness to adopt a course of action prescribed by the League of Nations than by the parliament at Westminster. When, however, the League seemed unable to take effective action, some of us, despairing of Europe and in utter frustration, turned to a policy of isolationism. Indeed, current rumor had it that most of the civil servants in the Ministry of External Affairs at Ottawa were or professed to be isolationists.

Isolationism Untenable

The issues of this war have made isolationism as untenable as pacifism and even less Christian. Since the fall of France, even the French-Canadians show signs of deep anxiety and support the war policy of the government. At long last they have realized that the "last shot" fired on Canadian soil for the defence of Canada may be too late to be effective. Isolationism, too, like pacifism, tends to prevent a nation from taking the steps necessary to its own defence. It thus helps to involve us in war instead of keeping us out of it.

Those of us who have studied extensively and studiously in most of the great nations of the Western Hemisphere realize, too, that the idea of creating a permanent *hemispheric bloc* is, both from the political and the economic viewpoint, largely a mirage. Something, of course, can be done along those lines, but once let the Nazis win in Europe and Brazil, which is the heart of South America, would be a "push-over." The Nazis, once installed there, would forcibly convert the petty dictators into *Gauleiter* or "liquidate" them if they offered resistance. The United States would then have to arm to the teeth and be prepared either to fight it out to the death or else to throw sop after sop to the victors. Hemispheric isolationism is a mirage. We in Canada know it; so do the leaders in Washington.

But isolationism is not only impracticable; it is essentially unchristian. The whole world has become, for better for worse, both a melting-pot and a neighbourhood, and if freedom fails anywhere, it fails everywhere. Abstention from participation in con-

licts not primarily of our own making (are we always sure of our innocence?) may in some instances be justified, but no nation can be absolved from the Christian doctrine that we are members one of another, and that if one member is wronged, all the members are wronged. We rise or fall together. That is no mere sentiment; it is hard, economic fact. The war, to say nothing of the depression, should have taught us North Americans that lesson, however refractory and slow to learn we may have proved ourselves.

We in Canada are, in point of territory, trade and resources, a great nation; in point of population, a relatively small nation. As members of a self-governing Dominion we know and understand the political, economic and psychological problems which confront all small countries. We can well understand the aversion of such small countries to war. We appreciate why many of them, impotent and fearful as they faced the destroyer, sought to save themselves by a futile neutrality. They postponed availing themselves of the power of collective action until it was too late. For them, our heart bleeds. We too were unprepared, and had we been in the path of the adversary, our lot might have been theirs. Fortunately for us, there were bastions between us and the foe. These have given us a breathing-space in which to arm ourselves for the inevitable encounter. This relative distance from the bloody fields of Europe is

one of our high privileges, but it is a privilege coupled with a tremendous responsibility. In the clear consciousness that we have made no mistake in declaring war and that our feet are firmly placed in the path of duty, God has given us a strange peace and an easy conscience such as some of us found lacking in many of the American delegates to the recent ecumenical conference. For they seemed to be threshing over old straw and finding it all but impossible to come to any conclusions. For us the future may be fateful but "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." All is well.

You in the United States have perhaps the greatest power for good or for evil in all this dreadful world. Like us, you have the advantage of some distance from the immediate area of conflict and this may serve you well if you do not hesitate too long. Your great endowments and powers imply, of course, an equivalent responsibility for the maintenance of the structure of the world. How you shall best exercise these responsibilities is a question which only you can decide and the bleeding world awaits your verdict. On your decision hang not alone the future of freedom in the world, and the future of civilization, but your own security and that peace of mind which comes only to those who show decision of character. We too await your decision; not with entire disinterestedness since we realize that "*we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*" But if not, who knows?

The World Church: News and Notes

Papal Wisdom

The Catholic Church has disappointed its critics who were afraid that its aversion to Communism would tempt it to take the side of the Nazis in their war on Russia. The Pope has been wiser than Mr. Hoover and Colonel Lindbergh. His eloquent silence in the international broadcast a week after the Russian hostilities broke out has set the tone for Catholic interpretations.

The pastoral letter of the Bishops of Germany, distributed on July 6, contained the most vigorous criticism of Nazi politics yet made by German Catholics. Coming at this particular time, its condemnation of Nazi paganism was particularly significant. The Catholics of America, who believe in the necessity of resisting Hitler, have found a new and very strong voice in Bishop Joseph P. Hurley of the diocese of St. Augustine, Florida. Bishop Hurley derided the notion that the war had become a holy crusade against Communism and declared in a radio broadcast recently, that "the Nazis remain the Number One enemy of America." He said that the "British are now battling heroically for God and country," but that the stupidity of people who believed in the Oxford pledge

"laid their island open and brought them to the brink of disaster. Let us admire the British people in their magnificent penance, but let us not emulate their sin and folly," the Bishop declared.

Papal influence has not completely silenced the voices of those who would welcome a Nazi victory over Russia even if it meant Nazi domination over the whole western world. But it has reduced those voices in Catholicism to a whisper.

Swiss Protestants Meet

The Swiss Protestant Church Alliance met in Geneva on June 9th and 10th. The Reverend Alphons Koechlin of Basle was elected President. Dr. Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches reviewed the status and work of the ecumenical Church in war time. He declared that the churches had really kept the promises made at the Oxford conference in regard to the proper attitude of churches in times of war, that they had in general refrained from the bad kind of "war sermon," that contact between the churches in various nations had been maintained, that they had supported orphaned missions and rendered great service

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to war prisoners and civilian internees and that ecumenical studies were proceeding despite the war. Dr. 't Hooft said that the churches had been "thrown back upon the Holy Spirit" by living in a world which detests supra-national communities and had therefore become more truly the *Una Sancta*, based upon the sure foundation.

Belgian Catholics and the Nazis

It is reported from a responsible source that the Nazis intended to organize religious demonstrations in Brussels and Bruges on May 20th, to commemorate certain Fifth Columnists who lost their lives at Abbeville a year ago. Since the purpose was obviously a political one, the Belgian hierarchy forbade Catholic priests to participate in these events. Methods of intimidation have since been used against the Belgian hierarchy. After the refusal of the Catholic Church to co-operate in the public honoring of the traitors, the *Nieuws van den Dag* reported that the Cardinal-Archbishop's Palace at Malines was "tarred to the height of three or four metres, and inscribed 'Away with the priests.'"

The *Pays Reel*, a Belgian paper which has both anti-clerical and pro-Nazi leanings, took the opportunity for another outburst against the Church. "These innocent victims were refused the relief of the Church's prayers," it declared. . . . "We regret this. When the Vatican shows adaptability in recognizing immediately the liberation of Croatia by the Axis, the Belgian Church, alas, commits all possible mistakes, making a friendly arrangement impossible."

It has been pointed out by Catholic commentators how closely this follows "Nazi technique, particularly the use of the false report that the Vatican has 'recognized' the puppet government of Croatia, though the Vatican has been both silent and circumspect about the matter. It recalls the use, in Holland, of reports that the German bishops had written pastorals supporting the Hitler regime: reports the Vatican had denied."

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Present Attitude of the German Church

The Spiritual Issues of the War, a British publication, has printed the translation of an article from an important organ of the German Protestant Church, which expresses clearly the mixture of Christian piety and political nationalism characteristic of the German Protestant Church. Illustrative excerpts read: "When we speak of the relation of evangelical Christians and the evangelical Church to the war and to wartime questions we must first make clear a two-fold truth. The Christian, who is not one in name only . . . knows that it is not his personal choice whether he will or will not be a Christian, and equally it is not his personal choice whether or not he will be a German. As to the first, it is clear that we have over us a God and Lord to Whom we must submit in life and death; . . . that He has called us to freedom from sin, death, the devil and all the powers of darkness; that this Gospel touches us personally. This message we can either accept or reject. If we receive it then we recognize as well that God has called us to faith, freedom and eternal life; it is not our doing or our arrangement.

"As to the second, we are German because we were born of German fathers and German mothers, because we carry in our blood the irrevocable character of our peoples; . . . When we recognize that God has created us this carries the implication that He has given us our body and our blood, that He has willed our German 'existence' and determined it, that He has given our German people its special history, an ethos which was there before us, and will remain after us, and to which we are bound for good or for ill. This supra-personal national entity carries in itself the will to maintain its existence, the popular *will-to-arms*. To this popular will-to-fight the Christian says with his whole heart 'yes'. The enemy of Christianity should not throw doubt on this by quoting certain sentences from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was giving out no regulations for public life and the affairs of a whole people. Paul especially made it clear that Authority, when it uses the sword to strike at evil—that is to say, in the present concrete case, to overcome the enemy's desire to destroy us—is nothing less than the servant of God."

A Prayer

Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations.

Book of Common Prayer (American Revision, 1928).

Dr. Claris E. Silcox, author of the article in this issue, is a Canadian who was for six years General Secretary of the Christian Social Council of Canada. He is at present secretary of the Canadian National Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship and Director of the Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews. Dr. Silcox directed the discussion at the recent North American Ecumenical Conference which met in Toronto.